THE POINT OF HONOR:

A PLAY,

IN THREE ACTS.

TAKEN FROM THE FRENCH,

AND PERFORMED WITH UNIVERSAL APPLAUSE AT THE

THEATRE-ROYAL, HAY-MARKET.

By CHARLES KEMBLE.

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PROLOGUE.

WRITTEN BY A FRIEND.

SPOKEN BY MR. BARRYMORE.

When novelty's the rage, and love of change,
And things are doated on becauſe they're ſtrange;
When from received opinions to depart,
Is the firſt canon of dramatic art,
How ſhall he fare whoſe unaſpiring hack
Jogs on the broad way and the beaten track,
Leaps o'er no moral fence, nor dares to prance
In the wild regions of untried romance?
Though bards more bold like devious comets fly
In paths eccentric through the boundleſs ſky,
Scorn not our Author's leſs ambitious flight,
Whoſe orbit's humbler, if more true his light;
Think not his morals too ſeverely nice,
If not one tear be claimed for ſuffering vice;
If no falſe virtue's dangerous diſguiſe
Veil her loath'd image from your cheated eyes.
Not ours the maxims of the liberal ſchool,
Whoſe bold exceptions ſuperſede all rule;
But Virtue here, throughout each trying ſcene,
Rears 'midſt the ſtorm her high commanding mien;
Say *muſt* he fail who makes his ſole appeal
To paſſions which the ſimpleſt heart may feel?
Has Guilt, redeem'd by ſentimental ſhow,
Monopoliz'd each ſource of tender woe?
And muſt your eyes on *principle* be dry,
When chaſte Affection heaves her *purer* ſigh?
No—ſtill your hearts ſhall ſympathizing ſhare
The pious anguiſh of a Sire's deſpair,
Who weeps, yet glories in a blameleſs Son,
By laws too rigid, not by guilt undone,
And own the palm well-earn'd o'er Love by Honor won.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

Chevalier de St. Franc,	*Officers under the old government of France.*	Mr. Barrymore.
Valcour, - -		Mr. Fawcett.
Durimel, - - -		Mr. C. Kemble.
Steinberg, - - -		Mr. Suett.
First Officer, - - -		Mr. Trueman.
Second Officer, - - -		Mr. Atkins.
Zenger, - - -		Mr. Klanert.
Steibel, - - -		Mr. Chippindale.
Keeper of the Prison, - -		Mr. Abbot.
Mrs. Melfort, - -		Miss Chapman.
Bertha, - - -		Miss De Camp.

The action passes in a small town upon the German frontier.

THE POINT OF HONOR.

ACT I.

SCENE I. *A Room in Mrs.* MELFORT'*s house.—Tables, chairs, &c. &c.*

Mrs. MELFORT *and* STEINBERG *meeting.*

STEINBERG.

So, so, so! fine times these! soldiers without end; infantry, cavalry, dragoons, light troops, hussars, baggage-waggons, and the devil knows what, pouring in upon us! Well, I foresaw it all! Don't you remember, Mrs. Melfort, what I predicted last Wednesday was two years, when I read you the gazette of the sixth of March? I foresaw that this would become the seat of war—I foresaw the whole plan as well as they who designed it: I make no doubt, now, but the enemy will compel us to shew our joy at their arrival, by a voluntary illumination and public rejoicings.

Mrs. MELFORT.

Better so than to behold our streets streaming with blood; and the four corners of our poor little town delivered to the flames.

STEINBERG.

What! admit the foe without resistance? I love my country, madam; I am a patriot; you understand me?

Mrs. MELFORT.

Indeed, sir, I do not; pray explain yourself.

STEINBERG.

Well then, madam, the protection you have

afforded that young Frenchman, whom you have made in a manner one of your family, ſufficiently evinces your partiality to his whole nation, and his inſolence keeps pace with your——

MRS. MELFORT.

Sir, ſir; the perſon you ſpeak of is a young man of extraordinary merit; he is prudent, economical, intelligent: nor was it poſſible for me to find a perſon better calculated to conduct my affairs: add to which, he was unfortunate, and that alone had been ſufficient claim on my protection.

STEINBERG.

Well, I have done: but you don't know what reports are in circulation—all your friends are ſhocked at them.

MRS. MELFORT.

Reports! and pray what are they? (*ſmiling.*)

STEINBERG.

Why, they go ſo far as to talk of marriage between him and your daughter; and you may well ſuppoſe—

MRS. MELFORT.

Yes, ſir, I can well ſuppoſe that ſuch reports are calculated to give uneaſineſs: and to put an end to them at once, Durimel ſhall call her wife to-morrow.

STEINBERG.

I'm aſtoniſh'd! Why, madam, what can induce you to——

MRS. MELFORT.

The reports of which you were juſt ſpeaking—reports you know, Mr. Steinberg, are dangerous.

STEINBERG.

I can bear no more; here's gratitude to the man who generouſly offered to rid you out of the cares of widowhood.—I did think you would have no objection to me as a ſon, whatever might be your reaſon for rejecting me as a huſband.

Mrs.

Mrs. MELFORT.

I believe, ſir, you have frequently heard me ſay, that I thought no ſacrifice too great to ſecure my daughter's happineſs: I am now about to do it: imagine, then, how great muſt be my ſatisfaction in reflecting, that inſtead of raiſing a bluſh on my daughter's cheek, in beholding the ceremony of her mother's nuptials, I ſhall now appear with honour at the celebration of hers.

STEINBERG.

Then I have been completely deceived in my expectations? I who never——

Mrs. MELFORT.

We cannot know everything, ſir; and he who, in reading a gazette, knows ſo well how to predict the future revolutions of Europe, often propheſies extremely ill when he reads in the eyes of a young girl—but ſhe is here; I will inform her of what has paſſed, and ſhould you be fortunate enough to ſucceed with her, I promiſe you I will not in any way oppoſe her inclinations.

Enter BERTHA.

My dear Bertha, you are come very *à-propos*: Mr. Steinberg inſiſts on having you for his wife. What ſay you? Do you approve of him for your huſband?

BERTHA.

For anything elſe in the world—but for a huſband, oh, no, dear madam.

Mrs. MELFORT.

What are your objections?

BERTHA.

Oh! do not aſk me: you know as well as I do: to you I confide the moſt ſecret wiſhes of my ſoul; and I have already avowed——

Mrs. MELFORT.

Proceed.

BERTHA.

What! name him? Oh! you know him well.

STEINBERG.

What! Miſs Bertha, a fellow who comes from I don't know where, who has not a ſhilling to bleſs himſelf with; an adventurer; and you can prefer him to me? really, madam, a prudent mother owes it to her child not to ſuffer her to be guilty of ſo much folly.

MRS. MELFORT.

You hear what Mr. Steinberg ſays, my dear; ſo anſwer for yourſelf.

STEINBERG.

Reflect, my dear Miſs Bertha, how terrible it will be to have all my expectations cruſhed; I who have lived ſeven long years in hope.

BERTHA.

Live ſo ſtill, my dear Mr. Steinberg; for all who hope are happy; and, I fear, you would no longer be ſo if we were married: our ages, our taſtes, our ſentiments, all differ; we ſhall live much better as friends: be generous then; ſpeak to me no more of love, and your friendſhip will be ſtill the dearer to me.

STEINBERG (*ſighing*).

Ah! Miſs Bertha, I remember you quite an infant; I watched, with rapture, the growth of your charms: and now you diſdain me; you reject me —me who would have left you everything I have in the world—me who am ſo old a friend too.

BERTHA.

Is it not natural, ſir, at my age, to prefer a younger friend?

STEINBERG.

Very well, miſs, very well! and ſo you prefer a beggar—a —— If I cared leſs about you I could inform

inform you, but I won't; no, no; I've done; ingratitude is worſe than ——

Mrs. Melfort.

Come, come! no enmity; my daughter has acquainted you with her ſentiments, then do not blame her, if her heart—

Steinberg.

Don't tell me—don't tell me: there's nothing but ingratitude upon the face of the earth—how the world's changed! perverted! ah! what's become of your poor deceaſed huſband? he would not have uſed me thus; he was my friend—he was a man of good ſenſe and enlightened underſtanding; it is but too plain he is no longer here. Bad world!—nothing but ingratitude, cruelty, and treaſon.

[*Exit* Steinberg, *and returns almoſt immediately unperceived.*]

Mrs. Melfort.

His exclamations fatigue me; (*During this ſpeech* Steinberg *returns, as if about to ſpeak; but perceiving himſelf to be the ſubject of converſation, retires to a cloſet in the flat, where he overhears the reſt of the ſcene,*) yet they are excuſable; I cannot bear to ſee diſtreſs, even in thoſe who do not reſpect the ſenſibility of others.

Steinberg.

'Tis of me they are talking, and I ſhould like to know their opinion of me—liſteners, they ſay, hear no good of themſelves.—I'll try the truth of that remark (*goes into the cloſet*).

Bertha.

What a difference between him and Durimel! oh! my dear mother, 'tis you who create my happineſs and his: what unaffected ſincerity he poſſeſſes! you were ever decided in his favour, and I derive ſo much pleaſure from that deciſion,

that

that I ſometimes fear a change in your ſentiments. This place is full of envy.

Mrs. Melfort.

Baniſh your fears, my child: I believe him to be worthy of your love: and, in uniting your fortunes, how ſweet will it be to me to pay the debt of gratitude I owe him, in a manner ſo congenial with my feelings! Be to him equable, complaiſant, and affable: diſpel the ſmalleſt cloud which threatens to obſcure the ſunſhine of your peace: women have not force for their inheritance; candour and an affecting ſoftneſs are their only arms. Avoid caprice; it is the rock on which our happineſs is often wrecked; and, in the married ſtate, trifles light, and even imperceptible at firſt, contain the dreadful ſeed of dangerous diſcord: continue, then, your confidence in me, that my experience may aſſiſt you to prevent or diſſipate the ſtorms which may ariſe.

Bertha.

I ſee no clouds, nor do I dread a ſtorm; the ſun of happineſs ſhines full upon me, and brightens all my proſpects.

Mrs. Melfort.

You are now, dear Bertha, on the point of entering into duties, the ſweeteſt, ſure, of life, but not the leſs important: ſummon, then, all your courage; be prepared for all events, for to-morrow you become the wife of Durimel.

Bertha.

With what care, with what anxious tenderneſs, you watch over my happineſs.

Mrs. Melfort.

Here he comes: we ſhall raiſe him to the very ſummit of felicity; but I fear the height will turn his brain.

Bertha.

BERTHA.

'Tis he; but I dread to—I have not power—I—permit me to withdraw. [*Exit* BERTHA.

Mrs. MELFORT (*calling*).

Bertha! Bertha!—Ah! ſhe's gone.

Enter DURIMEL.

Why did you not hold her?

DURIMEL.

My preſence was perhaps the occaſion of her flight, madam: if ſo, it would have been a rudeneſs to have held her. I ſear I have interrupted you.

Mrs. MELFORT.

Not in the leaſt, not in the leaſt; ſhe will not always ſhun you thus (*ſmiling*). Hear me, Durimel; it is time to beſtow upon your merit, your attachment to our intereſts, and a ſentiment, the riſe and growth of which I have with pleaſure mark'd, the ſweet reward which you expect, and I, with truth, can ſay, is but your due. What ails you?—why are you ſilent?—have you any diſagreeable news to communicate?—ſome delay, ſome failure, among our correſpondents?

DURIMEL.

No, madam; your affairs are in a more flouriſhing condition than ever I remember them; the books, which I delivered to you yeſterday, muſt have convinced you of the truth of what I ſay.

Mrs. MELFORT.

What can this mean; to be ſo ſad at ſuch a moment, when all things ſmile around you! Tell me, Durimel, has not your heart a ſecret preſage of the happineſs which now awaits you?

DURIMEL (*ſighs*).

No, madam; I can no longer cheat myſelf into a belief that there is any happineſs for me.

Mrs.

Mrs. Melfort.

Durimel, I am no ſtranger to your love; the nobleneſs of your ſentiments has acquired my moſt ſincere eſteem: then take my daughter; I give her to you; to-morrow ſhe ſhall be yours.

Durimel.

Oh! madam, how ignorant are you of the ſituation of my ſoul! True, I have dared in ſecret to cheriſh the ſweet hope. Bertha! I adore her; but, in the name of all your bounty, I conjure you, tell me ſhe ſincerely loves—ſhe loves as I love her;—tell me, my benefactreſs, my guardian angel, tell me; for my future deſtiny hangs on it.

Mrs. Melfort.

If I ſhould tell you, will you be more diſcreet, more compoſed? You are no longer the ſame perſon. Yes, dear Durimel, my daughter's heart *is* yours entirely.

Durimel.

Then I defy you, Fate; ſhe loves me: to-morrow I may call her by the tender name of wiſe: ſhall I then fly from her, to end my days in ſorrow and deſpair? No: though loſs of life ſhould be the price of ſuch ſupreme delight, I'll ſtay, I'll die content.

Mrs. Melfort.

Die! you have fill'd my mind with terror. Should you be unfortunate——

Durimel.

Unfortunate! have you not beſtow'd your daughter on me? but you do not know me; you might, however, have ſuſpected, that a voluntary exile does not quit the cheriſh'd ſcenes of his birth without a cauſe: who knows whether a ſingle word will not recal the blind partiality which pleads in my behalf; whether Bertha herſelf will not reject, nay bluſh, for having loved me.

Mrs.

Mrs. Melfort.

Reject you ! Oh ! no, dear Durimel ; I cannot be deceived : if I have never sought to make you break the silence you have imposed upon yourself, t'was from a firm conviction that the virtues you possess could never spring from a corrupted heart : from what you are, I judge of what you have been—what you will be. The husband of Bertha, you become my son : now guard your secret, or confide it to a mother's breast : you are at liberty to choose.

Durimel.

I am unable to resist. I was about to quit you. Start not, but summon all your fortitude to hear, as I must to relate my story. Rear'd far from the tender eyes of a parent, it is but rarely I've enjoy'd the blessing of embracing him at sixteen years of age, deprived of all resource, and animated by the example of my father, I follow'd the career of arms : in performing the painful duties of my station, my courage never fail'd ; and yet, how frequent were the occasions to exercise it ! It was my lot to serve under a colonel the most oppressive, the most inflexible of men : five years of patience had I pass'd beneath his iron yoke, when, oh ! fatal moment, unjustly molested, my blood began to boil ; I answer'd sharply, and receiv'd a blow—disgraceful outrage ! which, at this distant period, covers me with blushes.

Mrs. Melfort.

Moderate this passion, I entreat you ; it terrifies me.

Durimel.

No ; I could not bear it ; an involuntary motion carried my hand to my sword, and in the moment when I thought vengeance within my reach, I be-

came a ſlave; degraded, loaded with irons, and thruſt into a dungeon, my only reſource was to bribe my guards, and, by a ſudden flight, eſcape the humiliating, loathed ceremony, of aſking pardon for an injury received: I was inſtantly denounced, purſued, declared a deſerter, and adjudged to death.

MRS. MELFORT.

To death! oh! heaven.

DURIMEL.

A wandering outcaſt, I arrived upon the German frontier: Fortune then ſeem'd to ſmile in offering me an aſylum under your hoſpitable roof, where ſeven years have roll'd away in peace; but, in the happieſt moment of my life, the moſt deſired, the war conducts the very regiment hither which bears my ſentence: my judges are at your door, madam; once known, my doom is certain.

MRS. MELFORT.

Flight would be dangerous.

DURIMEL.

Flight! oh, if I fly I muſt abandon all that's dear to me: upon ſuch terms life is not worth the having, and I will ſtay and die with Bertha.

MRS. MELFORT.

Conceal yourſelf within the houſe; theſe regiments muſt ſoon give place to others; and this aſylum, without doubt, is preferable to any.—Haſte then, this inſtant, and conceal yourſelf.

DURIMEL.

But, Bertha——

MRS. MELFORT.

Be careful not to let a ſingle word eſcape you; if you ſhould, her fears will ruin all! we will acquaint her with the danger when it is over: appear before her, but with prudence; do not ſeem to fear, but let your carriage——

Enter

Enter a Servant of Mrs. MELFORT.

SERVANT.

Madam, the regiments have entered the town—two officers are billeted on us, and here is the order.

Mrs. MELFORT.

Prepare two chambers inftantly at the far end of the corridor, and let nothing be wanting.

[*Exit* Servant.

DURIMEL.

Alas! what trouble have I brought upon you! Why did you not place your tendernefs on one more fortunate?

Mrs. MELFORT.

Think you I loved you only when you were happy? do me not fo much injuftice:—but come; you muft inftantly retire to the apartment behind the manufactory.—Calm your terrors; confide in me; and with a mother's anxious care I'll watch over, and conceal your fafe retreat from every eye.

[*Exeunt Mrs.* MELFORT *and* DURIMEL.

Enter STEINBERG *from Clofet.*

STEINBERG.

Except mine—what I have juft heard will do; 'tis good, very good.—Now, my young Frenchman, I may chance to be even with you; for tho' I lofe my miftrefs, I fhall find my revenge; and will not forego the opportunity.

[*Exit* STEINBERG.

SCENE II. *A Hall.*

Servants crofs the ftage with portmanteaus.

Enter ST. FRANC *and* VALCOUR.

VALCOUR.

Now, Major, confefs; are we not in high fortune, to fall fo fnugly under the roof of a handfome widow, whofe

whoſe daughter is an angel? you ſhall attack the widow, chevalier; methinks I already overhear you in a charming *tête-à-tête*, relating the moſt intereſting paſſages of your youth; I am told ſhe's a charming woman, and I give you my honor, if (by the deſcription) her daughter were not ten times more to my taſte, I ſhould not ſo eaſily conſign her over to you.

St. Franc.

Valcour, in the pleaſure of triumphing over women, you ſeem to forget that the enemy remains unconquer'd.

Valcour.

Far from it, my dear Major; 'tis love alone can make a hero of me; it amuſes, it enflames me: I muſt be active, and till our duty calls us to the field, how can my buſy, reſtleſs mind ,find ſweeter employment?—this divine creature once ſubdued, I'll prove a thunderbolt of war.

St. Franc.

And can you then thus coolly meditate——

Valcour.

Coolly! ſay you? I'm all on fire; my heart's in a blaze.

St. Franc.

So it has been in every different town we've entered; yours is a moſt uncommon heart, my friend; the fire ſo many times experienced muſt have reduced it almoſt to a cinder.

Valcour.

True, Major; but, phœnix-like, it riſes from the aſhes replete with tenfold vigour.

St. Franc.

But conſider, Valcour, we are under the roof of a reſpectable woman, whoſe daughter is both beautiful and virtuous; think then how diſaſtrous may

may be the conſequences of your irregular and wild deſires.

VALCOUR.

Diſaſtrous! ha, ha, ha!

ST. FRANC.

Even to yourſelf, young man! Think you ſo lightly then of bringing miſery upon a lovely innocent young creature, whoſe own ſimplicity and natural goodneſs inſpire a confidence in all around her? think you that remorſe, more bitter than the tears you cauſe to flow, will ceaſe to ſting and goad the heart, which, for a paſſing momentary joy, embitters all the future hours of a life which elſe had flown away in peace and virtue? Never believe it: a widow's cries to the offended Deity for vengeance on her child's ſeducer, ſhall fall in thunder on the wretch who baſely wronged her noble hoſpitality, and robbed her of the ſtay and comfort of her age.

VALCOUR.

Bravo, major! By my honor, the chaplain of the regiment would find it difficult to produce ſo good a ſermon.

ST. FRANC (*with great reſerve*).

If you pleaſe, ſir, we will chooſe another ſubject.

VALCOUR.

Content, ſay I; for in ſpite of all this giddineſs, this folly, my heart aſſures me you are in the right.

ST. FRANC.

The Council appears much irritated at the late deſertions.

VALCOUR.

And not without reaſon, I think; in three days ſeven and twenty from one company!—I fear they will make ſome terrible example to ſtop the further progreſs of the evil.

ST. FRANC.

And yet, however neceſſary may *be* the example, is

is it not terrible to turn the arms which oft have gained them victories, against the hearts of those who bore them? Valcour, I am fill'd with horror at this bl ody preparation; the bare mention of a deserter chills my very soul: think, then, how dreadful is the charge allotted me, to give the fatal signal for their deaths—to see their straining eyes fixed eagerly on mine, to the last moment, hoping a reprieve—oh! 'tis too horrible. Their judges should, like me, have risen by length of service from the common ranks—like me, have felt the ils which private soldiers feel—then might the life of many a wretch be spared to fight his country's battles still, and call down blessings on them for their mercy.

VALCOUR.

Why do they not send them home to cultivate their native peaceful vales, and for us reserve the dangers and the glory of the fight? then would desertion be unknown among us; as prompt as terrible, we should fly to victory; and the intrepid band might fall in slaughtered heaps upon the bloody plain, but never would desert it. Ah! here comes our charming hostess; Allons, Chevalier, I'll introduce you.

Enter MRS. MELFORT.

Chance, dear madam, often disposes of us much better than we could of ourselves; and we are infinitely her debtors for having thrown us on your hospitable shore; she has conducted us to the abode of beauty, knowing that we had eyes to distinguish, and hearts disposed to do it homage.

MRS. MELFORT.

I know not how to answer to such high-flown compliment—the apartments I have ordered to be prepared are ready for your reception; shall I attend you to them?

VALCOUR.

You are a moſt adorable creature; and where-ever our apartment may chance to be, if you are but our neighbour, we ſhall be delighted with it. To tell you the truth, I can't bear ſolitude; it makes me hypochondriacal; and you Germans are ſo fond of lodging one at the end of corridors a mile in length, that I have ſometimes, in my melancholy fit, ſuppoſed myſelf the plague, thruſt into a remote corner of the houſe to prevent my being caught. With a little humouring I'm as gentle as a lamb; but fierce—implacable, if provoked.—But where, madam, is your enchanting daughter? in whoſe praiſe no tongue is ſilent—the power of whoſe charms all hearts have felt? Why, major! are you making game of us?

ST. FRANC.

What extravagance! what folly!

VALCOUR.

Ah! madam, you do not know the meaning of thoſe impatient ſhrugs. The mere deſcription of your daughter has bewitched him. Why is ſhe not with you? Why does Love's offspring ſhun its mother? Have you commanded her abſence? I hope not; for if you have, he'll be outrageous: he has been breathing nothing but flames and darts. There, there—don't you ſee how much he's agitated? Don't think of concealing her from him, for his vehemence is exceſſive; and, if once enraged, he becomes a madman.

ST. FRANC.

From what you have juſt uttered, the lady might fairly infer that you were one already.—I flatter myſelf, however, madam, that while we have the pleaſure of remaining under your roof you will have no cauſe to complain of the conduct of your gueſts.

Mrs. MELFORT.

We ſhall be friends, I make no doubt; and, to ſhew you that I have no fears on my daughter's account, I will immediately introduce her to you.—Who waits?

Enter SERVANT.

Tell my daughter I wiſh to ſpeak with her. [*Exit* Servant.] Though I aſſure you I am loath to interrupt her, for 'tis a buſy time: to-morrow is to be her wedding-day.

VALCOUR.

To-morrow! oh, don't think of it; you are too precipitate. Believe me, 'twill be time enough to celebrate the nuptials when we are gone.

ST. FRANC.

Loſe not a moment, madam, in ſecuring her future happineſs. The object of her choice and your approbation muſt needs be worthy of her.

VALCOUR.

Take care—take care, I tell you! You are too precipitate. I'll venture to aſſert ſhe does not prodigiouſly love her intended ſpouſe.—Come, now, confeſs, Mrs. Melfort, ſhe is not over head and ears in love with him.

Mrs. MELFORT.

You'll pardon me—I think ſhe loves him moſt ſincerely.

VALCOUR.

No—I tell you no; ſhe may, indeed, imagine that ſhe loves him, but I aſſure you it is no ſuch thing. A huſband, you know, my dear ma'am, is a very convenient kind of being: but her love for him is no more to be compared with that ſome lovely creatures have felt for me——It was tranſport—madneſs——In ſhort, I can't tell you what it was.

Mrs. MELFORT.

And when your ingratitude brought them again to reaſon, moſt bitterly did they lament their folly; did they not, ſir?

VALCOUR.

Why, as to that—

Enter BERTHA.

But here, if I miſtake not, comes your daughter. What blooming beauty!—See, major, what a lovely bluſh overſpreads her cheek! We are happy, madam, in——How ſoft is this fair hand!

BERTHA.

Reſerve for others, I beſeech you, ſir, theſe violent expreſſions of eſteem.

ST. FRANC.

Valcour! for Heaven's ſake, conſider—

VALCOUR.

I have done—I have done, major: yet, to raviſh ſo innocent a favour cannot, ſurely, be a crime.

ST. FRANC.

Let us retire to our apartments: we have no time to loſe.

VALCOUR.

True—you ſay true. I may be killed to-morrow; ſo I'll e'en make the moſt of to-day.—They tell me, my angel, you are going to be married: but, if I may be thought worthy to adviſe, you will defer——

ST. FRANC.

I have buſineſs with you, and you muſt come. Every moment, now, is precious.

VALCOUR (*ſuffers himſelf to be led by* ST. FRANC).

Oh! if you have buſineſs that muſt be attended to—She is unacquainted with half her worth! Did you ever ſee anything ſo beautiful, chevalier?

valier? What a complexion! How fine is the turn of that neck! How graceful the whole demeanor! She's a figure for an officer; and then, to throw herſelf away upon a—— But as I have not had the pleaſure of knowing the gentleman, I won't abuſe him.

ST. FRANC.

Follow me this inſtant, Valcour, or I loſe all patience.

VALCOUR.

I come—I come, chevalier! A little mercy on my bones, dear major!—Ay, by my honor, a figure for an officer!

ST. FRANC.

Shame on you, Valcour! You'll bring diſgrace upon the name.

[*Exeunt* ST. FRANC *and* VALCOUR.

MRS. MELFORT.

Come, come, my child, let us retire, and avoid his inſolence.

BERTHA.

What are we to expect from the licentious ſoldiery, when e'en their chiefs, forgetting what is due to female delicacy, can thus diſturb the peace of helpleſs families, and injure thoſe it is their duty to protect.

Enter DURIMEL.

DURIMEL.

They are retired, and I may at length appear. With what impatience have I waited for this moment!

MRS. MELFORT (*aſide*).

Imprudent Durimel! why have you ventured out? If you ſhould be diſcov——

BERTHA.

What ſay you, mother?

Mrs.

Mrs. MELFORT.

Nothing, my child.

BERTHA.

But you were about to ſay ſomething;—and you, too, Durimel, ſeem agitated. Ah! I am no longer happy! Why did you refuſe to appear with me before theſe officers, your countrymen? Why keep yourſelf concealed? Had you been here, they would not have inſulted us.

DURIMEL.

Inſulted you! Have they then dared to——

Mrs. MELFORT.

Bertha! ſeek not to be acquainted with his motives; let it content you that I know them—Is not your happineſs my only care? Why, then, perſiſt in an inquiry?

BERTHA.

I have done, dear madam; in all I will obey you.

Mrs. MELFORT.

Give me your hand then—yours, Bertha; with all my ſoul I give her to you—May every future hour of your lives bring a freſh tribute of felicity, and this happy union of two virtuous hearts draw down upon you heaven's choiceſt bleſſings!

DURIMEL.

Oh, Bertha! are you then mine! (*kneels and kiſſes* BERTHA'*s hand.*)

Enter VALCOUR *behind them.*

VALCOUR.

I have made my eſcape at laſt from that merciléſs major, and may now return to the—— (*ſees* DURIMEL *kiſſing the hand of* BERTHA, *runs and taps him on the ſhoulder*)—Very well, young man; very well, indeed.

DURIMEL.

Sir!

MRS. MELFORT.

Oh, heaven protect him!—Should he be known——

VALCOUR.

So, ſo, ladies; it was to play me this pretty trick, you lodged me in the Antipodes; I'm your very humble ſervant—It was cruel though to baniſh me to the end of the world, when you knew I was ſo deſirous of being your neighbour: this I preſume is the intended—ha! his air is not ſo Germanic as I expected. By my honour, ſuch a ſpark may be dangerous!—And do you ſeriouſly, friend, intend to enter the liſts with me? (DURIMEL *ſmiles in contempt, and turns up the ſtage.*)

MRS. MELFORT.

You are uncivil, Sir; your apartment is provided for you, and I muſt inſiſt on your retiring.

VALCOUR.

'Tis into the heart of this lovely creature I would retire—I will accept no other aſylum. Incomparable woman, behold at your feet——(*kneels, attempts to take her hand*—DURIMEL *comes between them.*) Well, Sir, whom do you ſtare at?

DURIMEL.

Do not provoke me to reply.

VALCOUR.

What! you are about to be impertinent?

DURIMEL.

No, Sir; but I will puniſh your preſumption, ſpite of the uniform which you diſgrace.

VALCOUR.

A menace, by the honor of a ſoldier! You are not a German, I perceive.

DURIMEL.

Painful ſilence! how my blood boils! (*aſide.*)

Mrs.

Mrs. MELFORT.

Durimel! withdraw, I beg of you.

BERTHA.

Do, if you love me, Durimel.

DURIMEL.

Let my compliance prove my love—but think not to escape unpunished, sir; the time may yet arrive, when you shall dearly mourn this insolence.

[*Exeunt* DURIMEL *and* BERTHA.

VALCOUR.

Ah! my fair fugitive; *you* must not thus escape me (*runs after* BERTHA).

Mrs. MELFORT (*holding him*).

What are you about, sir? By what authority do you presume to treat us thus? I no longer esteem you as a man of honor; and be assured I will make known your conduct through the town.

VALCOUR.

By the honor of a soldier, ma'am, you are extremely strong in the wrist—methinks you make too great a fuss about so trifling an affair. If you exclaim so violently on my first approaches to the town, what will you say when it capitulates?

Mrs. MELFORT.

To such language it is impossible for me to reply. Go, sir; and know, that the heaviest misfortune of the war, in our estimation, is the necessity we are under of admitting you beneath our roof.

[*Exit* Mrs. MELFORT.

VALCOUR.

Ha, ha, ha! our worthy hostess is in a fury; and on reflection I don't much wonder at it: I am too volatile—but what the devil can a man do in a strange place like this, if he does not make himself agreeable to the ladies? But have I made myself agreeable? I fear not—it is no matter—I shall be more successful in my next attempt—

Strange

Strange fellow this intended husband! Well, I won't kill him; but I'm resolved to pursue the adventure, as well to punish his impertinence as to procure myself amusement: for a garrison town without entertainment is the devil; and if I had not constantly affairs of gallantry or honor on my hands, I should die in a week of the spleen.

[*Exit.*

THE END OF THE FIRST ACT.

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*A Room in Mrs.* MELFORT'*s House.*

ST. FRANC *and* Mrs. MELFORT *diſcovered ſeated.*

ST. FRANC.

I aſk a thouſand pardons, madam, for the behaviour of my young friend; his ſpirits often run away with him; yet, I do not think he would, upon deliberation, act diſhonorably: let me, therefore entreat you to overlook the preſent rudeneſs, and I give you my honor that, for the future———

Mrs. MELFORT.

It is entirely forgotten: if his conduct has occaſioned us uneaſineſs, your goodneſs and civility have made us full amends: did your companions but reſemble you, we ſhould endure the evils of the war with greater reſignation.

ST. FRANC.

Youth can alone excuſe the thoughtleſneſs which makes a mere amuſement of a profeſſion in itſelf ſo ſerious; in which even our ſucceſs ſhould cauſe our tears to flow. Is it not enough to obey the terrible neceſſity which commands us in the fight to ſhut our ears againſt the cries of nature and of pity; but we muſt, even in our hours of relaxation, wound the hearts of thoſe who give us ſhelter? How painful are to me the duties of the war! how pleaſurable thoſe of peace! for I may then fulfil the ardent wiſhes of my ſoul; and, in ſome meaſure, repair the dreadful ills of which I have been the blind and fatal inſtrument,—by ſolacing the woes of ſuffering humanity.

Mrs.

Mrs. MELFORT.

With ſuch noble feelings how many bleeding wounds you muſt have cloſed! how many bitter tears have dried! you ſhould be happy, ſir.

ST. FRANC.

The number of the happy is but ſmall—neceſſity at firſt induced me to take arms, and it has ever been to me a hard duty. I have, indeed, attained to a condition much above my birth; yet, ſtill, I cannot ſay that I am happy.

Mrs. MELFORT.

And yet the rank you hold may give advantages many might envy.—An officer, on more than one occaſion, acts a diſtinguiſhed part.

ST. FRANC.

True, madam; many an officer would think the rank which I poſſeſs an ample recompence for a life of ſervice: how then muſt I be gratified, who have riſen to it from the loweſt ſituation in the army? incorporated theſe five years with a different regiment from that in which I learned the rudiments of war; almoſt the only one who 'ſcap'd the dreadful ſcythe of war, which mowed down my companions, it was my chance to gather laurels, round which fell Envy's ſerpents twined, and raiſed up enemies againſt me more implacable, more dangerous than any I e'er encountered in the field! Would you believe, madam, that even thoſe who, by their birth alone, hold equal rank, can ſcarce endure to ſee me by their ſide? Would you believe I often hear them ſaying, in contempt, "He's but an officer of fortune!" Heartleſs, unfeeling men! they remember well the obſcurity of my origin, but forget the ſcars with which my breaſt is covered.

Mrs. MELFORT.

What, ſir, can warriors then feel envy?—warriors, who, together, follow the glorious career of arms,

arms, and ſerve one common mother! Oh, it cannot be.

St. Franc.

It is too true; but that is not the grief which preys upon my heart—Reaſon lifts me far above ſuch pitiful injuſtice, too common among men, and teaches me to view their little paſſions with diſdain.—More ſecret pains conſume me; real ones, alas! the offspring, not of ambition, but of nature. —Pardon me, madam, I ſhould not grieve in your preſence, nor trouble the ſerenity of your mind—you ſeem happy—you have a child, the joy, the comfort of her mother—you are about to marry her.

Mrs. Melfort.

I am, ſir: the youth to whom ſhe is deſtined poſſeſſes the moſt amiable qualities; and, though his fortunes are inferior to my daughter's, yet, by his virtues, he is more than equal to her.

St. Franc.

Then he is worthy of her, and you are ſurely bleſt.

Mrs. Melfort.

Ah! ſir, appearances are oftentimes deceitful—every one has griefs, and concealment but aggravates the pain which they occaſion—yet—yet—there are often reaſons that forbid a confidence, which we find ourſelves diſpoſed to hazard (*St. Franc weeps*); your pardon, ſir, I've given you uneaſineſs.

St. Franc.

I feel moſt ſenſibly what you have juſt ſaid, madam; I feel we often burn with a deſire of pouring out the ſoul before ſome faithful friend, whoſe ſympathizing tenderneſs may ſoothe the woes with which it is oppreſſed—'tis ſuch a friend I need:—the dear companions of my early years have ſunk, before me, to the grave; and now, when I am on the

the point of following them, ſhall I contract new friendſhips but to ſee them broken?—I am entirely ſurrounded by ambitious rivals, or young men profoundly occupied with trifles; can I, then, to ſuch as theſe, confide my cares?—Oh! no; you are a mother, madam; your heart ſhould be reſponſive to my own:—ſhall I, then, diſcover—yet wherefore ſhould I grieve you—wherefore tell you woes, which you may pity, but cannot relieve.

Mrs. MELFORT.

Though they admit not of a cure, it will be ſome relief to utter them; and pity's gentle aid may——

ST. FRANC.

I am, indeed, a being to be pitied—none know how much!—What are to me the honours I enjoy?—the pleaſures which attend my ſituation! I had a ſon, madam; a ſon, who was to me moſt dear; his birth was welcom'd but by nature, for I had only tears at that time to beſtow on him; but now, when fortune ſmiles upon me—when I have it in my power to make him happy, I can nowhere find him—I can gain no tidings of him:—No; I have loſt him; and in ſuch a manner as makes me almoſt wiſh he never may again be found. (*Loud roll of drums, accompanied by fifes.*)

Enter BERTHA.

BERTHA.

Help, help! Fly, fly to his aſſiſtance—oh! mother!

Mrs. MELFORT.

What is the matter?

ST. FRANC.

Speak! explain!

BERTHA.

A guard of ſoldiers have ſeized on Durimel——

Mrs.

Mrs. MELFORT.

Oh heaven!

BERTHA.

And, with brutal violence, tear him from us, as if he had been guilty of ſome crime.

Mrs. MELFORT.

Oh! ſir, ſave him; your authority may ſet him free—embrace his cauſe, or——

ST. FRANC.

I will eſpouſe his cauſe—but, tell me, wherefore is he arreſted?

Mrs. MELFORT.

Alas! my daughter! I tremble to declare before her—retire, dear Bertha; leave us for an inſtant—retire, I beſeech you, and confide in me.

BERTHA.

Still, ſtill this myſtery! why am I kept in ignorance? if this concealment laſt, my heart will break. [*Exit* BERTHA.

Mrs. MELFORT (*kneels*).

You, ſir, are now my only hope—Oh! how could they diſcover his retreat! in heaven and you I truſt: Oh! ſave him, if it be poſſible—he is a deſerter from your regiment.

ST. FRANC.

Gracious heaven! how have you ſhaken me! my heart is ſtill more torn—more agonized than yours. How often have I ſunk with terror, leſt in ſome wretch, like this, I ſhould diſcover my unhappy boy. Oh, God! thou know'ſt how anxiouſly I wiſh to ſee, yet how I tremble to regain him. Should this be he—dear, cruel hope! uncertainty is inſupportable; I run, I fly to end it.

[*Exit* ST. FRANC.]

Mrs.

Mrs. MELFORT.

What combats muſt I now ſuſtain! what terrors ſtifle! Oh! heaven, give me courage—what brings Steinberg here?

Enter BERTHA *and* STEINBERG.

BERTHA.

Here is my mother, ſir,—now, what of Durimel?

STEINBERG.

Bleſs my ſoul, what a hurry you are in! if I were going to be ſhot now, you would be quite calm;—did I not always tell you he would come to no good?—you would not liſten to my counſels when you might, and now it's too late. I ſuppoſe, by this time, you know the whole ſtory of his being taken to the guard-houſe, and immediately recognized by an old ſerjeant.

Mrs. MELFORT.

Come, come, my Bertha, we'll leave him; he only wiſhes to afflict us (*endeavours to lead* BERTHA *away*).

BERTHA.

No, I will ſtay; for nothing I can learn will pain me more than this ſuſpenſe.

Mrs. MELFORT.

Oh! my dear child, pray to be ignorant of it—you will know it but too ſoon—arm yourſelf with courage—your unfortunate Durimel——

BERTHA.

Well?—(*Mrs.* MELFORT *endeavours to ſpeak, but cannot.*)

STEINBERG.

Doesn't ſhe know that he's a deſerter?

BERTHA.

A deſerter! oh! heaven! (*falls on her mother's neck.*)

STEINBERG.

STEINBERG.

Yes; 'twas the young officer that is billeted upon you, who informed againſt him—he is before the council of war now; and, by this time, the whole affair is ſettled:—'tis impoſſible he ſhould get off; and, to-morrow, on the parade, he will be—

Mrs. MELFORT.

Leave the houſe, and never let me ſee you more; —wicked, revengeful man! who triumph'ſt in the evils which oppreſs us, go and leave us to our torments.

STEINBERG.

Is it my fault that he is a deſerter? I can't help his being ſhot, can I?

Mrs. MELFORT.

No reply, ſir; I will be obeyed.

STEINBERG.

Well, I'm going.—Bleſs my ſoul, how haſty they are! The daughter is in a hurry to let me in, and the mother to turn me out:—I think I'm even with my young rival though; he'll find I don't ſuffer an enemy to forage on my territory with impunity. [*Exit* STEINBERG.

BERTHA.

The dreadful ſecret is at laſt revealed, and Durimel is a deſerter!—already he may be condemned and about to ſuffer. Oh! cruel, cruel judges! will not my tears appeaſe you?

Mrs. MELFORT.

Compoſe yourſelf, my deareſt child! things are not ſo deſperate as you imagine—the old officer has promiſed to eſpouſe his cauſe; I expect him every inſtant:—oh, then, be calm; and learn to bear the ſad viciſſitudes of life.

BERTHA.

Durimel! Durimel! what are thy present thoughts? does not thy heart now call on me? methinks I dread to see thee; feelings, before unknown, now rush into my soul, and fill it with despair and horror.

Enter VALCOUR.

MRS. MELFORT.

What do I see! Oh! let us fly.

VALCOUR.

You see a man oppress'd by grief and wonder.

BERTHA.

Monster! we curse the hour when first you passed the threshold of our door.

MRS. MELFORT.

How could you be so base, so cruel, as to betray a poor unhappy youth it should have been your pride to have protected? *(going.)*

VALCOUR.

Who? I betray! Stay, I entreat you, stay;—you know but little of my heart—'tis my own fault; perhaps I have been indiscreet; but I swear to you by the honor of a man that I was ignorant of the arrest till I beheld him at the council. Oh! had you entrusted his unhappy fate to me, I might, I would have saved him.

BERTHA.

It was not by your order then he was arrested?

VALCOUR.

Cease, madam, I conjure you, to impute to me a crime so odious—I should blush to combat such a charge; if I had power to save, not one of them should perish. But I lose time; the colonel under whom he served is my own father—Do not despair—I will throw myself at his feet, embrace his knees,

knees, ſolicit and obtain a pardon—no repoſe, no tranquillity for me, till I have freed your lover, and reſtored him to your longing arms: 'tis thus I'll be revenged on your ſuſpicions; 'tis thus I will compel you to confeſs, that levity is not incompatible with feeling, nor gallantry with virtue.

[*Exit* VALCOUR.

BERTHA.

Think you we may hope, mother?

MRS. MELFORT.

We are not yet certain of his fate.

BERTHA.

Oh! let us fly to him—he wants us now—my heart's tormented, and I judge of his ſenſations by my own. If he muſt die, oh, let thy mercy, Heaven, ſtrike me firſt, and end my wretched, wretched being. [*Exeunt* BERTHA *and Mrs* MELFORT.

Scene changes to a Room.

Enter ST. FRANC.

ST. FRANC.

The only blow I dreaded has fallen and cruſh'd my every hope. Impenetrable Providence! how dark, how ſorrowful haſt thou rendered the end of my career. Alas! to find him was the only hope which cheered the proſpect of my declining days: but to find him thus—oh! when my hand guided in peace his early years, how far was I from thinking that the ſame fatal hand would one day give the ſignal for his death—why was he not ſnatched from me when, ſick and languiſhing in his cradle, I wearied heaven with prayers for his recovery? I then had 'ſcaped the horrors of this moment—Alas! I knew not what I then demanded! I knew not I implored for woes, whoſe bitter pangs would burſt my poor old heart——

Enter Mrs. MELFORT.

Oh! ſpare me, madam, ſpare me! I ſaw him, I knew him;—yes, he is my ſon.

MRS. MELFORT.

Merciful Providence!

ST. FRANC.

Misfortune's cruel ſhafts at me alone are levelled; but I may now defy the malice of my fate, for I no more am vulnerable. I ſhall ſoon become acquainted with my ſon; if he poſſeſs a noble mind, he will know how to die—my taſk will then be eaſy.

MRS. MELFORT.

Are you not one of his judges? are you not his father? ſurely that title, and the ſervice you have rendered to your country——

ST. FRANC.

Will not avail—Juſtice is inflexible, and knows no diſtinction: it is ſacred only while it is blind.

MRS. MELFORT.

Surely the colonel under whom he ſerved——

ST. FRANC.

He is my moſt inveterate enemy, and deaf to my entreaties: then conſtancy ſupport this drooping heart—No more ſhall theſe white hairs be humbled to the duſt—no more my earneſt prayers be ſpurned—Oh! no—fierce and inexorable, ſhould I again implore, his malice would but triumph in my woes, and haſten the doom of my unhappy boy. I have ſaved many: but thou, poor wretch! wilt not eſcape, becauſe thou art my ſon.

MRS. MELFORT.

Did he know you at the council?

ST. FRANC.

No, madam; he has not ſeen me ſince his childhood; and was as far from thinking me in

the

the ſtation which I hold, as they who ſurrounded us were from ſuſpecting him to be my ſon—it was a trying moment—yet, in my grief, I taſted of ſome joy; my heart was ſatisfied of his courage; and with pride I own'd the blood which flow'd in his veins—no meanneſs, no humiliation, to obtain his life: he anſwered to their interrogatories without boldneſs, without fear: I too ſuppreſs'd, with painful art, feelings which ſtruggled to burſt forth, and ſaw him doom'd without a groan.

Mrs. Melfort.

Oh! how could you reſtrain the joy of making yourſelf known to your unhappy ſon? ſure ſuch a ſcene had melted the ſtern hearts of thoſe who doom'd him, and they had given him free to the long-wiſh'd embrace of a dear father.

St. Franc.

You know them not; all I could obtain for him was leave once more to viſit this loved manſion: nor could I gain even that, till I had bound myſelf in the moſt ſolemn manner to anſwer for his perſon. Had I found a ſon unworthy of me, he never ſhould have known his father; but, as he is, why comes he not?—why is he not already in my arms?—Oh! I will claſp him to a fond father's heaving breaſt; acknowledge, and then drown him with my tears.

Mrs. Melfort.

Shall I then ſee him once again? Oh, heaven!

St. Franc.

I die with impatience to behold him, yet dread the moment of his arrival—I wiſh to be alone with him: then let me beg we may not meet with interruption: above all, keep your dear daughter from us till our interview be ended, then we will join you——Hark! I hear the tread of feet:—he

comes, he comes: leave me, madam, leave me, I entreat you. [*Exit Mrs.* MELFORT.

Enter DURIMEL.

ST. FRANC.

Oh, Heaven! let me but live a little while; and I with pleasure will resign the unhappy remnant of my days.

DURIMEL.

My longing eyes in vain seek Bertha: I fear to meet, yet cannot die in peace till I behold her. She can console me for my sufferings; she—she alone. But she flies me, dreads to encounter, and abondons me to my fate.—'Tis to you, sir, I am indebted for the liberty I now enjoy of once again beholding these dear scenes of happier days. They are fled. I have to entreat that to this kindness you will add another; 'tis in your power, and I am confident you will. You seem'd, of all my judges, most touched at my misfortunes: they are great, alas! You see me weep, but 'tis not for myself. Oh, my unhappy father! what will become of thee, should Heaven have prolonged thy days? Thy poor old heart will surely break, when thou shalt hear my lamentable end! (*Takes out a letter.*) Grant, Heaven, the sentiments expressed in this may soothe the agonies which he must feel! He shall find I followed the noble precepts he instilled into my soul; and, to the last moment, cherished virtue, honour, and religion.

ST. FRANC.

What do I suffer! (*aside*).

DURIMEL.

The name of my father is the only assistance I can give you in the search. He serves in a regiment which, having suffered greatly, has been since incorporated with another; the name of which I do not

not know. I entreat you not to neglect it. You have, perhaps, a ſon; if ſo——

St. Franc.

I have! I have!

Durimel.

Then, by the love you bear him, I conjure you to be active in your inquiries after my dear, loved father. Promiſe me this, and I ſhall die in peace.

St. Franc.

Give me the letter. (Durimel *gives the letter.* St. Franc *reads it.* Durimel *fixes his eyes ſtedfaſtly on him*; *and* St. Franc, *extending his trembling arms, exclaims*) My poor, poor Charles!

Durimel.

Oh, Heaven! is it poſſible that——

St. Franc.

What! doſt thou heſitate? For many a year thou haſt eluded my embrace; then torture me no more, but fly, at length, into theſe old, fond arms, and claſp, oh, claſp thy father!

(*They ruſh into each others arms, and remain for ſome time ſilent.*)

Durimel.

My father! in ſuch a moment! Kind Heaven, I thank thee! (*falls at* St. Franc's *feet, and embraces his knees.*)

St. Franc.

Doſt thou forget the moment which muſt follow? Charles, wilt thou preſerve this courage to the laſt?

Durimel.

I have reſolved it. Yet ſhould ſome fond regret linger about my breaſt, and ſhake the firmneſs of my ſoul, it is from you, my father, I expect a look which ſhall recal the courage of your ſon, and teach him how to die.

St. Franc.

Dost thou not know 'tis I must give the signal for thy death? Heaven knows, many a poor wretch, like thee, has found in me a father. In each of them I thought that I embraced a son. Shall I, then, lose the fruit of all the pains I have endured? Oh, no! 'twill cost my life; but all that should endear it to me will be lost; and I shall bless the pitying hand that strikes, and puts a period to my woes.

Durimel.

I was about to die in peace; but now the love of life revives within my breast, and all my resolution staggers. I have found a father! Scarce have I time to bathe his venerable hand with tears of joy, when pitiless fate summons me to the *spot* where my grave already is prepared.

St. Franc.

Thy griefs are great—I feel them all; together we must learn to conquer them: then murmur not, but unto Providence submit——

Durimel.

I will submit—without a groan I'll die. This seems to me an easy task: but, without a murmur, to renounce the blessings which awaited me—the dearest object of my affections—is far beyond my strength: then give her to me—let me but call her wife, and then——

St. Franc.

Well, be it so. Your marriage may be solemnized.—Heaven forbids not hope: it is the only treasure of the wretched, then who could be so savage as to rob them of it?—But say, my son—what sacrifice hast thou yet made to offer to that God, before whose awful throne thou shortly must appear? 'Tis not enough to yield submissive to the blow which we cannot avoid: another sacrifice is

is neceſſary—a voluntary ſacrifice: the following hour is almoſt thy laſt, yet haſt thou dared to dedicate it to another!

DURIMEL.

Oh, my dear father! can we offend the Being we adore, by ties ſo pure—when formed, too, in his ſacred name? Together we will bleſs him, for thus permitting us to be united before our everlaſting ſeparation. Think not that ſelfiſhneſs inſpires the wiſh; oh, no! the motive is more pure—more worthy. When I ſhall be no more, what ſympathiſing friend will dry my Bertha's falling tears—will ſoothe my father's bitter anguiſh? Our marriage ſolemnized, ſhe finds in you a father, you have ſtill a child; and I ſhall then ſubmit with humble reſignation to my fate.

ST. FRANC.

What, if this moment thou wert ordered forth?—what, if thou ſhould'ſt no more behold thy Bertha?—would'ſt thou with firm and manly ſtep march forth to undergo thy ſentence?

DURIMEL.

If you, my father, ſhould command it—If ſuch muſt be my fate——

ST. FRANC.

Well?

DURIMEL.

A ſigh would ſure break forth, but ſtill I would ſubmit.

ST. FRANC.

Then follow me, my ſon—follow thy father to the fatal ſpot; for thou muſt die within this hour.

DURIMEL.

Die! Oh, Heaven!

St. Franc.

Let us quit the houſe without tumult. Avoid the cries, the tears, the wild deſpair of theſe beloved innocents, and meet thy fate without the pangs of parting.

Durimel.

Oh, God! my heart is breaking!

St. Franc.

Doſt thou follow, Charles?

Durimel.

An inſtant, deareſt father—but an inſtant!

St. Franc.

Thou trembleſt; thy courage falters, and thy promiſe was above thy ſtrength.

Durimel.

It was—it was! (*after a ſtruggle*) yet ſtill I will perform it. Oh, Heaven! accept the agonies of a torn heart. Bertha! beloved Bertha! what will become of thee? We ſhould have been united—Oh, cruel ſeparation!—But though thou art not ſuffered to hear my parting words, I will be near thee ſtill; death has no empire o'er the ſoul, and mine ſhall hover round thee.—Now—now, my father, ſeize theſe trembling hands, and tear me from the ſpot!

St. Franc.

Hold, Charles—it is enough; the ſacrifice is now accompliſhed, and Heaven demands no more. Thou ſhalt again behold thy Bertha, and to thy grave bear with thee the ſacred name of huſband. Enjoy the happineſs which ſtill awaits you, and forget the fatal hour we expect until it ſound.

Durimel.

You have recalled me from the tomb! Shall I again behold her—again enfold her in theſe arms? —Oh,

—Oh, Heaven! when the laſt hour ſhall arrive, my father, dread not to encounter your now happy ſon: he will be ready; and when the heavy, awful drum ſhall roll the ſignal for his death, without a ſigh he'll bend him to his fate, and not diſgrace his ſire! [*Exeunt.*

THE END OF THE SECOND ACT.

ACT III.

SCENE I. STEINBERG's *House*.

Enter STEINBERG *in a morning gown and ſlippers, as if haſtily rouſed from his bed; ſpeaks as he enters to* ZENGER, *who follows him.*

STEINBERG (*with a letter in his hand*).

VERY well, it is all very well—I'll give you the anſwer directly [*Exit* ZENGER].—What can this mean? I hope he has not heard of the improper uſe I made of his name; if he ſhould, I am ruined—let me ſee—let me ſee—(*reads*)

" Sir,
" Unleſs you inſtantly ſend the moſt ſatisfactory
" and ſubmiſſive apology for the inſult you have
" put upon me, I ſhall ſend thoſe who will beſtow
" on you the chaſtiſement your inſolence deſerves:
" I would inflict it in perſon; but you have ſo far
" degraded yourſelf by your unmanly conduct,
" that I ſcorn deſcending even to puniſh you.
" VALCOUR."

Oh dear, oh dear! what will become of me? what ſhall I do?—if I ſend the apology, 'twill be a confeſſion of my infamy, and the entire ruin of my credit will enſue—if, on the other hand, I do not ſend, I ſhall have my throat cut by a black-looking grenadier as high as a halberd.—Oh dear! oh dear! what ſhall I do to get out of this alarming ſcrape?—I had better make my eſcape—Matthias!—Zenger, the intelligence I have conveyed to the troops who have juſt quitted the town, reſpecting thoſe

thofe who now occupy it, will enfure me a favorable reception with them—why, Zenger! Zenger! I fay.

Enter ZENGER.

ZENGER.

Blefs me, fir; what ails you? how alarmed you look; why, you are quite pale; what has terrified you fo?

STEINBERG.

Alarmed! pale! why 'tis enough to make a man pale, to be dragged out of bed in the middle of his firft fleep—terrified, indeed! my courage, I believe, was never doubted.

ZENGER.

Ah! now you are yourfelf again—but, fir, have you written an anfwer to the letter I gave you juft now? the man who brought it is quite impatient to be gone—he fays his mafter will murder him if he ftays.

STEINBERG.

I'm all over in a cold fweat.

ZENGER.

Lord! fir, how your colour comes and goes to-day; why now you are as white as a fheet again.

STEINBERG.

Am I? how odd that is now; my cheeks quite burn.

ZENGER.

What fhall I fay to the young man?—he dares not ftay any longer—his mafter is fo very paffionate.

STEINBERG (*afide*).

I'm glad of it—I fhall gain time by this at any rate—you may tell the young man he need not wait—I'll fend you with the anfwer when it is ready—and, do you hear, make all the hafte you can in packing up, for I am refolved to leave town this

this very day.—(*Exit* ZENGER.)—Bleſs my ſoul! theſe ſoldiers are ſo haſty (*loud knocking*). Oh, Lord! Oh, what's that? If he ſhould already have ſent his myrmidons—

Enter ZENGER, *ſhewing in two* OFFICERS; *ſpeaks as he enters.*

ZENGER.

This way, gentlemen; there is my maſter.

[*Exit* ZENGER.

STEINBERG.

Soldiers! Oh, I'm a dead man.

FIRST OFFICER.

We wait on you, Sir, in conſequence of a letter—

STEINBERG.

Yes, Sir, a letter—What will become of me? (*aſide.*) I was juſt conſidering—

FIRST OFFICER.

The buſineſs requires no conſideration; an immediate anſwer is all we want.

STEINBERG.

I had better make the apology at once, for I may then have a chance of eſcaping in a whole ſkin (*aſide*). Well, gentlemen, your commands ſhall be obey'd—I will write the anſwer directly.

FIRST OFFICER.

You need not give yourſelf that trouble; all we demand is a verbal anſwer to a very ſimple queſtion: Do you acknowledge this to be your writing?—your name, I think, is Auguſtus Steinberg? (*taking out a letter.*)

STEINBERG.

Yes, Sir, Auguſtus is my name. Why, what a miſtake have I made! 'tis quite a different buſineſs I find—ſome contract for the army I ſuppoſe (*aſide*).

SECOND

SECOND OFFICER.

And that you confefs to be your hand-writing?

STEINBERG.

Yes; that certainly is my writing; I could fwear to it by the A's and the G's—no one forms the letter A as I do.

FIRST OFFICER.

Enough, Sir; you will have the goodnefs to accompany us to the council of war, which is now fitting, in expectation of your arrival.

STEINBERG.

Yes, yes; 'tis certainly fome contract—Oh, Sir, they do me too much honor—but I am fuch a figure, that I really feel afhamed to—Permit me juft to change—

FIRST OFFICER.

Upon thefe occafions the etiquette of drefs is in general overlooked. You muft remain, and affix feals to all the doors in our abfence.

SECOND OFFICER.

I'll fee it done.

STEINBERG.

Seals upon my doors! what for?

FIRST OFFICER.

It is the cuftom with us, whenever we fufpect a perfon of conveying information to our enemies.

STEINBERG.

I hope, gentlemen, you don't fufpect me of fuch wickednefs.

SECOND OFFICER.

Oh, no; we don't fufpect—we have proof.

STEINBERG.

Proof! oh, the malice of this world! Gentlemen, if you will but grant me a little time, you fhall

ſhall ſee how clearly I'll refute the charge and cover my enemies with confuſion.

FIRST OFFICER.

Soldiers, though ſevere, are juſt—the opportunity of clearing yourſelf will not be wanting—but yours muſt be a moſt ingenious defence, to invalidate the powerful evidence contained in this epiſtle, which you have juſt confeſſed was written by yourſelf.

STEINBERG.

I made a miſtake—'tis all a forgery! I'll take my oath 'tis not my writing.

FIRST OFFICER.

Nay, nay; there can be no miſtake—you know you could ſwear to it by the A's and the G's.

STEINBERG.

It is a plot upon me.

FIRST OFFICER.

No one forms the letter A as you do.

STEINBERG.

Miſerable man that I am! why did I ever learn to write?

FIRST OFFICER.

Away, away, away! [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II. *A Priſon.*

(*A lamp nearly extinguiſhed; day breaks gradually;* BERTHA *and* MRS. MELFORT *diſcovered in a large chair;* BERTHA *ſleeping, and* MRS. MELFORT *quite exhauſted with watching and fatigue;* DURIMEL *on his knees. He riſes and advances, looking frequently at* BERTHA.)

DURIMEL.

Her heavy eyes, fatigued with weeping, yield at length to ſleep: repoſe, ſweet innocent! forget thy griefs,

griefs, and dream of happiness—she stirs; no—still as death—I dread the moment of her waking! Could I escape before—(*drum at a great distance*)—Hark! I hear the distant drum calling the companies to the parade—how rapidly the hours have flown! Time seems to envy me the few moments yet in my possession, and with giant stride accelerates the approaching hour of my death—Bertha! dear Bertha! to part with thee is all I have to do; but 'tis a task so difficult, so dreadful—no; this instant will I fly, and spare us both unutterable torment (*going*).

BERTHA (*sleeping*).

Durimel! Durimel!

DURIMEL.

My love!—'twas but a dream; she smiles upon me—oh! do not smile, my angel! for if thou dost my fortitude forsakes me—Oh! how have I deserved these sufferings! No more shall the blest hours, sacred to the chastest tenderness, return; those which are to come belong to courage and to resignation—to courage? Alas! one moment still remains, enough to shake the firmest soul. Oh, God! 'tis thou must strengthen me—thou knowest 'tis not the brilliant sun which I regret, the idle pleasures of a thoughtless world; but friendship, tenderness, and love—the sentiments with which our natures sympathize—these are the charms that bind me to the earth, and render death so bitter.

BERTHA (*still sleeping*).

You are his king! you are a God! Disposer of lives!—my husband!—Pardon, pardon, or I expire at your feet! (*she screams and starts from the chair*—DURIMEL *catches her in his arms.*)

MRS. MELFORT.

My child!

DURIMEL.

My Bertha!

BERTHA.

Where am I? Oh, unhappy Bertha!—I thought I was upon my knees before thy ſovereign; that ſovereign thou haſt ſo often called benevolent and merciful—I implored thy pardon—I obtained it—'twas but a dream; yet I will hail it as the happy omen of my huſband's ſafety—no; thou ſhalt not die; heaven does not will thy death, and thou ſhalt live for me.

DURIMEL.

Will this blow be the laſt!—Be calm, my love! Death has for me no terrors—for thee alone I fear—thy ſufferings wound my ſoul! Hear me, Bertha; my father ſhortly will arrive, with him I muſt appear before my judges. He wiſhes to be private with me.

BERTHA.

Private! muſt I then leave you?

DURIMEL.

But for a little——ſomething, he ſaid, he had to tell me, which might induce my judges to be merciful; then leave me, Bertha! for while thou art preſent my every thought is centered in thee! Ah! do not weep.

BERTHA.

How can I ceaſe to weep? Is not thy life my own?

(ST. FRANC *appears behind, but ſeeing* BERTHA *withdraws.*)

DURIMEL.

Madam, madam! ſeparate us, I entreat you.

BERTHA.

Oh! cruel, cruel.

DURIMEL.

DURIMEL.

Leave me, I conjure you.

BERTHA.

I obey; but tell me, tell me, Durimel, doſt thou ſtill cheriſh hope?

DURIMEL.

I do, I do; forget not to offer up thy prayers in my behalf; thy virtue may diſarm the angry power which threatens to deſtroy me.

Mrs. MELFORT.

Come, my beloved child! let us retire and implore of heaven his pardon.

BERTHA.

Ay, there our earneſt prayers will ſurely not be ſpurned; for thence alone can innocence obtain redreſs, when mercileſs, inexorable man denies it.

[*Exeunt* BERTHA *and* Mrs. MELFORT.

DURIMEL.

I trembled leſt they ſhould ſtay—my father, as I think, appeared, but ſuddenly withdrew. Now, then, my ſoul, be firm; the moment is arrived—What they have ſeen of me is but a ſhadow—what they have yet to ſee will fill them with diſguſt and horror!——(*Enter* ST. FRANC)—Were you not here before, Sir?

ST. FRANC.

I was; but waited the departure of thy wife. Give me thy hand; 'tis well—it does not tremble—thou know'ſt I come for thee.

DURIMEL.

I expected you much earlier—Is everything prepared?

ST. FRANC.

The regiment is on the parade, and a detachment waits to conduct you thither.

DURIMEL.

Let me entreat you, ſir, to avoid this ſight! I tremble for you.

St. Franc.

Oh! heed me not; extreme misfortunes beget extreme courage.

Durimel.

Had it but pleafed the great Difpofer of events to fpare my life, to make me the comfort of your latter days—you weep—I have done—Oh! my dear fir, for the laft time blefs your unhappy fon, and may heaven ratify the pardon which a father pronounces in its name. (*Kneels.*)

St. Franc.

Thou haft my bleffing, boy; and may the Father of all mercy open wide his arms, and clafp thee to his breaft as I now clafp thee.

Durimel.

Death is no longer dreadful. Come, father, let us bravely meet it.

St. Franc.

My fon, I follow.

Enter Valcour.

Hold, my brave foldier; there yet is hope: although my father has refufed to grant the delay even of a few hours—though he rejects my prayers and is inflexible—yet if St. Franc will but confent, we ftill may fave you.

St. Franc.

Save him! oh! how?

Valcour.

If you have courage to embrace my project, I engage for its fuccefs—The regiment is already on the parade; and the detachment which fhould conduct him thither waits at the great entrance of the prifon—but, as you leave this dungeon, upon the left there is a paffage leading to a private door, which opens on the public road—two faithful fervants in whom I can confide are there in waiting with a carriage. This paper, fign'd by me, will

will ſerve him as a paſſport: then take it inſtantly, and let him chooſe his road.

St. Franc.

What do you offer! Have you no other means of ſafety? Cruel Valcour! think you I will conſent that you ſhould riſk——

Valcour.

Loſe not the time in thinking of the dangers I incur—the enterpriſe I own is hardy, but it ſhall be accompliſh'd: his ſituation intereſts me: my heart bleeds for him: yes, I have reſolved to ſave him. Could I, think you, bear to ſee him thus periſh in the flower of his youth—upon the eve of happineſs too, when a beloved tender miſtreſs ſtretches forth her lovely arms and hails him the huſband of her choice?—Oh! no; I have been falſely thought the vile deteſted miſcreant who betrayed him—why then do I delay an act of juſtice to myſelf?—let me this inſtant break his bonds, give him once more to freedom and his love; and prove, that though through thoughtleſſneſs I may unconſciouſly give pain, I have a heart which never ceaſes to reproach me till the wrongs my folly has occaſioned are redreſſed.

St. Franc.

My friend! my dear friend! I admire your generous courage—I never can forget it.

Valcour.

Why do you not profit by it?—my arms, this paſſport, my livery, all promiſe an eaſy and a ſafe retreat—Why, why, then, do you deliberate?

St. Franc.

Oh! Heaven, ſupport me—my friend will one day know this heart; and of what ſacrifices it is capable—more, more than life is here concerned—thy carriage waits?—then leave us to decide—fly to thy poſt; thy abſence will be marked; and I will follow—alone, or with my——

VALCOUR.

Is this a time for argument?—no, no; believe me 'tis not—each moment now is precious—here, here—take these—(*giving purse and passport*)—no thanks—conduct him from this scene of horror, and may heaven favour his escape! [*Exit* VALCOUR.

ST. FRANC—*after a pause*—(*extending the purse to* Durimel).

Charles? how do you decide?

DURIMEL.

My fate is in your hands—whate'er you shall decree, your son will cheerfully obey.

ST. FRANC.

Pronounce, my son, and save thy father.

DURIMEL.

Alas! I dare not.

ST. FRANC.

Oh! Charles, canst thou conceive how precious is to me thy life?

DURIMEL.

How much more precious is to me your honor! Was not my person delivered into your charge upon the faith of a promise?—is not the sacred seal of an oath upon the trust?

ST. FRANC.

Oh! Heaven! it is.

DURIMEL.

The sacrifice of honor is not in our power.

ST. FRANC.

How gladly would I here lay down my life to save thee.

DURIMEL.

My father's word, his faith, are pledged; and he must not recede.

ST. FRANC.

My son, my boy! thou art the hero, and thy father but the man: I am, I will be so—my heart commands.

commands it—I have no other law—Come, come, my boy, and let me ſave thee.

DURIMEL.

Never; you have given a ſacred promiſe—I will perform it—believe me, ſir, your ſon would rather ſuffer death with torture, than live to ſee his father's ſhame.

ST. FRANC.

Thy life is now my only thought; all other cares are loſt in that; fly, then, this inſtant fly, and ſpare thy father—the dreadful ſpectacle of a lov'd ſon expiring at his feet—fly, fly—oh! fly.

DURIMEL.

Think you I have ſo little profited by your inſtruction and example?—think you me ſo debaſed to purchaſe life with your diſgrace?—upon ſuch terms exiſtence would be hateful. Courage, dear father; I am well prepared; then, wherefore this delay? let us go forth, and with a noble firmneſs, the ſure attendant upon upright minds, laugh at the terrors of approaching death. (*Going.*)

Enter BERTHA.

BERTHA.

Where are you going?—whither would you lead him?—think you, you can again deceive me? I know what fate awaits him—my ſcatter'd ſtrength returns, and I have flown to ſave him. Ah! whither do you fly?—into the cold embrace of death!—and you, cruel, unnatural father! you, you conduct him to the fatal ſpot.

DURIMEL.

Ceaſe, Bertha; ceaſe this frantic grief—'tis fruitleſs; ſummon up all thy courage, love! for we muſt part.

BERTHA.

Part! Oh, Heaven! here—hide thee here: they cannot find you here: or, if they ſhould, they will not tear thee hence; no, they dare not tear

thee from thy fond Bertha's arms—My deep despair will touch their flinty hearts; my wild entreaties melt their ferocious souls; if these have no effect, my horrid screams will reach the throne of justice, and the red lightning of an angry God shall blast the inhuman butchers of their brethren, who thus would outrage love and nature.

DURIMEL.

Speak to her, sir: I cannot.

ST. FRANC.

Daughter, forbear——

BERTHA.

If my dear husband perish, what is the universe to me? Fortitude does not belong to me: my weakness is my only virtue. You may have courage—you have; I see it: it alarms me—it is full of terror: but surely you do not—no, you cannot love him with half the tenderness I feel.

ST. FRANC.

Am I not his father? Who, then, shall vie with me in tenderness?—If I, worn out with sorrow and with age, am firm, command thy feelings also, and respect my misery.

DURIMEL.

Bertha—dear Bertha! the wild expressions of thy agony are poniards in the bosom of my father!

BERTHA (*kneeling*).

Oh! pardon the disorder of a distracted wretch, who knows not what she utters—who, in her madness, may accuse e'en Heaven!—Ah! what paper have you there? Is it my husband's pardon? Will he escape the dreadful sentence?

ST. FRANC.

'Tis not impossible, my child: but let the event be what it may, you must now quit this place (*leads her to the opposite side of the stage*). My

 child,

child, my child, let not an old man's tears be ſhed in vain! Leave him, I entreat you, to fulfil the ſacred duties impoſed by nature and by honor. This—this is the moment of their triumph.—Go —go, my child, and I will ſoon rejoin you.

BERTHA.

With Durimel, my father?

DURIMEL (*after a ſtruggle*).

Now! now! Bertha—my love—my wife—adieu! [*Exit* DURIMEL.

BERTHA.

He's gone!—Let go your hold—unhand me! Let me, for mercy's ſake, once more behold him—Let me fly, and periſh by his ſide!—He's gone—he's gone, and I ſhall never ſee him more! Oh!—oh! room for my heart!—Oh! Durimel—my love! (*faints.*)

ST. FRANC.

Within there! Help! help! help!

Enter Mrs. MELFORT, *followed by the Keeper of the priſon.*

KEEPER.

How now! What is the matter?

Mrs. MELFORT.

Oh, my unhappy child! look up and bleſs thy mother with ſome ſign of life!

DURIMEL (*without*).

Why does my father tarry, when his ſon requires his aid?

ST. FRANC (*ruſhes out wildly*).

Charles—Charles! I come!

Mrs. MELFORT (*to the* Keeper).

Your arm, to lead her out.

DURIMEL (*without*).

Bertha! my love—my wife! eternally farewell!

[*Exeunt* Mrs. MELFORT, BERTHA, *and the* Keeper.

SCENE III. *The Parade.*

Halberds fixed—ſoldiers drawn up in expectation of DURIMEL *on each ſide of the ſtage*—VALCOUR *and other Officers diſcovered at their head—muffled drums beat.*

VALCOUR (*aſide*).

Oh! heaven! then he has not eſcaped.

PROCESSION.

When DURIMEL *is in his place, and* ST. FRANC *falls on his neck,* FIRST OFFICER *ſays to* VALCOUR,

FIRST OFFICER.

What can this mean? why all this intereſt for a ſtranger?

VALCOUR.

Humane and generous he ever was—yet I confeſs I know not to account for ſuch unuſual tenderneſs.

(*Muffled drums beat.* ST. FRANC *ſtarts wildly from the arms of* DURIMEL, *and ruſhes to the front of the ſtage.*)

ST. FRANC.

Now, ſpirits! rally round my heart—but for an inſtant bear me firmly up, and I no more ſhall need your aid.——Comrades! friends! brothers! it is decreed, that he who baſely quits the colours of his country merits death—the wretched victim, who now kneels before you in awful expectation of his fate, regardleſs of the ſtern decree, moſt raſhly has abandoned them; therefore, he——Oh! God! oh! God!—muſt I then ſtruggle with the fondneſs thou haſt placed about my heart, baniſh the father from my heaving breaſt, and, trampling on the ſacred laws of nature, pronounce the bloody ſentence on my own ſon—horrible! horrible!

 VALCOUR.

VALCOUR.

St. Franc! my friend! ah! what means this deadly palenefs on your cheek—this aimlefs motion of your eye? let not the generous pity pleading in your breaft hurry you to the tomb with the unfortunate it is not in your power to fave.

ST. FRANC.

Oh! that it were within my power; with rapture would I open all thefe veins; let gufh the purple ftream that rolls within them, and, to preferve exiftence to him, exhauft the fpring from which it flow'd.

VALCOUR.

How wild is this difcourfe.

ST FRANC (*after a paufe*).

Ha! it fhall be fo.

VALCOUR.

Pray, pray be calm.

ST. FRANC (*falling on his knees*).

Kind heaven! I thank thee—thou haft, in mercy, fent my better angel forth—'tis he infpires the thought.

(*Muffled drums beat a fhort roll*).

The fignal beats; then we'll be brief—Advance, ye minifters of juftice; ye, whofe fatal arms link time and dread eternity together, advance! prepare! now fire!

(ST. FRANC *throws himfelf before the body of his fon. During this fpeech the fix foldiers deftined to fhoot him advance, kneel, and point their guns; but recover arms as foon as* VALCOUR *fpeaks.*)

VALCOUR.

Hold! hold! what may this myftery mean?

DURIMEL (*having difengaged himfelf from the halberds and lifted the bandeau from his eyes*).

My father faints; fly, fly to his affiftance.

(*Soldiers affift to recover* ST. FRANC.)

VALCOUR.

VALCOUR.

Great heaven! his father!

ST. FRANC.

Let go your hold—no power on earth ſhall force me to it (*ſtarts up*). What! barbarians! would you coldly ſtare, and ſee a father murder his own ſon? yes, fellow-ſoldiers, know he is my ſon; then ſave, or ſtrike us both (*falls exhauſted into his ſon's arms, and ſoldiers form a groupe round him*).

VALCOUR.

Heroic virtue! why, why was this concealed? give him all help; ſuſpend awhile the fatal ceremony—for, if my hopes prove true, I yet may bring them pardon. [*Exit* VALCOUR.

(*The ſcene encloſes the others.*)

SCENE—Mrs. MELFORT'S *Houſe*.

BERTHA *recovering*—Mrs. MELFORT *watching her*.

BERTHA.

Oh! my mother, are you too their accomplice? Where is my huſband? Speak, oh ſpeak.

Mrs. MELFORT.

Spare me, my child; oh, ſpare thy mother.

BERTHA.

Alas! will no one look with pity on my ſufferings? They are inexpreſſible—my mother hears me not, conſoles me not—where am I? A heavy miſt obſcures each object—help, help me or I die. (*ſhe nearly faints, when a roll of the drum makes her ſtart from the ſeat*) Ah! what is that? Mother! did you not hear the formidable ſound? Should it be—it is, it muſt be ſo—oh! let me fly and pierce through all their files—let me but ſee him once—oh! let him, let him hear my laſt adieus.

Mrs.

MRS. MELFORT.

Alas! it is too late.

BERTHA.

Too late! oh, God! is there no hope?

MRS. MELFORT.

None but in heaven, poor, unhappy Bertha!

BERTHA.

Is he then abandoned? Left to perish? Why am I detained? (*drum rolls again*) It sounds again, and thunder rolls not so awful on the ear—Ah! now I see him, the fatal fillet on his brow—horrible moment! it sounds no more—oh! mournful, death-like silence! (*Several guns fired at once, after which* BERTHA *exclaims* "Durimel!" *and swoons; then roll of drums till she recovers.*)

MRS. MELFORT.

My child! my hope, revive! thou art the only consolation left, and canst thou thus abandon me?

Enter VALCOUR.

Assist me, Sir, to raise her from the earth.

VALCOUR.

Soft; she recovers—look up, look up, dear lady, and view the harbinger of joy.

BERTHA.

Where is my husband now?

Enter ST. FRANC *and* DURIMEL, *who runs and embraces* BERTHA.

ST. FRANC.

Here, here, my child; restored once more to liberty and thee.

MRS. MELFORT.

Good heaven!

BERTHA.

Oh! joy unutterable; but how, which way do I regain thee?

DURIMEL.

DURIMEL.

Behold my guardian angel (*pointing to* VALCOUR); he it was whofe generous pity faved me—then kneel, my Bertha, kneel with me, and join to thank him for thy hufband's life.

VALCOUR.

Nay; to your venerable father yield thofe thanks which your miftaken gratitude now pays to me—his magnanimity it was prevailed; that, that alone drew tears of pity down my ftern father's cheek, quelled his unjuft refentment, and, to the arms of a diftracted wife, reftored a lov'd, a happy hufband.

BERTHA.

Did I then fancy the report of guns?

DURIMEL.

The firing you heard, was a refpect paid by the foldiers to our beloved father; thus were the arms intended to deftroy your hufband, difcharged in joy for his deliverance.

ST. FRANC.

Juftice has laid her iron rod afide, and yields her throne to Mercy; who, with a milder fceptre reigning, fpreads joy and happinefs around.—One fear alone remains to damp them—the fear of your difpleafure (*to the audience*): let it not hang with fullen influence over us, but kindly banifh it with your applaufe.

THE END.

EPILOGUE.

" WHEN some rich squire to Hymen tells his woe ;
" As forth from church the wedded couple go,
" To grace the scene and glad the honest people
" He bids the ringers shake with peals the steeple ;
" Then jovial cries, 'Let these good folks be treated !
" May my example often be repeated.'
" So, when the bard has toil'd his last act through,
" And husbanded, or halter'd all the crew ;
" His hero married, and dispatch'd his rogue—
" Jingling like bells, appears the Epilogue.
" But say (to make the simile complete)
" Our good example when shall *We* repeat ?
" May we again renew our scenes of horror,
" 'To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow ?'
" Again our Point of Honor boldly try,
" And either nobly live, or bravely die :
" 'Hold, madam, hold ! A truce with your petition—
" Explain your terms,' exclaims some sour logician ;
" 'And tell, ere you denote your 'high behests,'
" On what the real Point of Honor rests.'
The Point of Honor, says an ancient wight,
Is to abhor what's wrong, and do what's right :
True ; but the mischief is, the giddy throng
Will jumble wrong with right, and right with wrong.
Time was, when burning for the public weal,
With coat of mail, and pantaloons of steel,
O'er hill and dale, the hero made a rout,
And while he laid about him, thought, no doubt,
Nature form'd heads, by way of amorous token,
Like curious mottos, only to be broken.
But in our days this race is nearly lost;
By cruel laws and sad misfortunes cross'd.
A modern hero thinks, when lost his pelf,
His Point of Honor is to lose himself :
So mounts his steed, resolv'd on deeds of death,
And tilts at all he meets on Hounslow Heath :
There cas'd in steel, sir knight concludes his glory ;
Rear'd high in air—a sad *memento mori*.

The

The Point of Honor!—idle he who tries
To catch the dazzling meteor as it flies,
'Tis now a horſe-race for a thouſand pound—
And now an axle-tree that ſweeps the ground:—
An honeſt country quiz to crack one's wit on—
A crowded court, without a chair to ſit on.
The Point of Honor veers as faſhion goes,
And turns to more points than the compaſs knows;
Save in one inſtance; when ſedition's band,
With foreign crimes would ſtain this happy land:
Bound in her union, Britain wards the blow,
And points the ſword againſt the general foe.
" Ye noble dames, who brave the ſultry weather
" In ſociables unſociably together,
" And ye of humbler ſort, who take the air
" With loving ſpouſe, wedg'd in a one-horſe chair;
" And cry, in gathering clouds, as on ye move,
" 'What duſt we doat on when 'tis man we love!'
" O may that ſun which warms your outward ſenſe
" Awaken here your kind benevolence."
To you our Author makes his laſt appeal—
To you he boldly truſts—for you can feel.
There is a point (he ſhows it in his play)
When rigid juſtice gives to fondneſs way;
Crimes which a father now abhors—approves—
Blames as a man, and as a parent loves.
Such is our Author's fate; his muſe, to-night,
On timorous wings has tried her maiden flight.
Faults which your cooler judgment may eſpy
He views, alas! with all a parent's eye:
His Point of Honor, ere he gains the goal,
Turns like the needle trembling to the pole;
And wavering waits the iſſue of the cauſe;
Chill'd by your frowns, or cheer'd by your applauſe.

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